The Faculty Learning Community for Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) has completed one phase and is in the middle of the second phase of its work. In the first phase, each participant identified lessons and learning and student growth outcomes they wanted to improve through ACL. Faculty researched ACL practices, identified measures of performance to assess, shared their proposals with their peers and developed detailed final proposals outlining goals, methods, measures and anticipated outcomes and implications. Phase one concluded with the Autumn 2014 semester.

Faculty are now in Phase 2 where they are implementing and measuring instructional strategies in their classes. Faculty meet periodically, in-person or in scheduled online discussions, to share experiences and challenges or to discuss an issue with practicing or measuring ACL. This will continue through Spring semester and into the early Summer semester. The final phase will be analysis and recommendations.

The self-reported data from the group has been positive, showing both increased practice and confidence using, ACL activities. In fact the greatest increases was in response to “Overall, how do you rate your confidence in applying ACL activities in your classes?” At the start of phase run, the average rating was 2.25 on a five point confidence scale. Now it is 4.11. Also improving by a whole scale interval are proficiency in “Mapping course content to ACL activities” (2.88 to 4.00), student frequency of “Discuss[ing] lecture material with each other in class” (2.38 to 3.44) and “Practice professional oral communication in class” (1.75 to 2.8).

While still above three on a five point confidence scale, confidence dropped slightly on two items related to the scholarship of teaching and learning: “Studying and evaluating academic research on teaching and learning?” (4 to 3.67) and “applying findings from research on teaching and learning?” (3.88 to 3.78). This mirrors group conversations about how increased exposure to the vast body of research, at different levels of analysis, is challenging to assess and validate through our own rigorous application and assessment.

In conclusion, here are what participants are saying in their own words:

“I’ve adjusted my classroom around ACL activities and can already see a difference in the way my students approach class. Even outside of my project, I’m trying the activities and finding them helpful in lesson planning and concept introduction. It makes
class more fun.”

“I understand the research at a broad-view and applied level, and the ACL faculty group has been very effective at helping me understand challenges to preparation and implementation.”

“I loved seeing the planning go into action with real students. It was awesome to see how they’ve responded to it and how well they are working together.”

“It's important for students to work together, but it's really important for faculty to work together. We should have more opportunities for informal observations of each other's classes and sharing what we do in the classroom.”

“I would like to see more institutional support for instructional improvements -- payment for faculty who are doing innovative and evidence-based work in classrooms, recognition of this work at the college level, and involvement in teaching other faculty strategies that they can implement regardless of discipline.”

“Active learning should compliment other teaching approaches, not replace them.”

“I do think we need an institutional approach to ACL. After hearing the SCALE team present at a recent conference, the idea of requiring ACL training for faculty seems like a productive idea for us at CSCC. “

“I feel that Columbus State has been supportive at the college, as well as departmental level, when it comes to practicing, evaluating and improving instruction...I do not believe the current Observations of Instruction lends for great evaluation of ACL but with a few modifications can better serve as a tool for overall instructional evaluation.”

- Rich James